

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 14031 161059Z
ACTION CU-03

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----- 026169 /10
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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8251
INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN
AMCONSUL KADUNA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OEXC, PFOR, NI
SUBJECT: NAFSA AND NON-PAYMENT OF NIGERIAN STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

REF: STATE 302976 (REPEATED INFO ADDRESSEES)

1. FMG IS ACTIVELY SEEKING A SOLUTION TO THE PLIGHT OF GOVERNMENT SPONSORED NIGERIA STUDNETS IN U.S. WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED DELAYS IN RECEIVING PROMISED FINANCIAL SUPPORT. DIRECTOR MEA AMERICAS DEPARTMENT EDREMODA TOLD POLCOUNS TODAY THAT THE PROBLEM IS PARTICULARLY ACUTE FOR THE NIGERIA CONSULATE GENERAL IN SAN FRANCISCO. EDREMODA SAID NIGERIA AMBASSADOR TO U.S. SANU HAD DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH EXTAFB COMMISSIONER GARBA DURING COURSE OF LAST WEEK'S CONSULTATIONS. EDREMODA VOLUNTEERED THAT THERE IS CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO CREATION OF A NEW FEDERAL OFFICE WHICH WOULD HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ADMINISTERING THE FINANCING OF ALL GOVERNMENT SPONSORED NIGERIAN STUDENTS IN U.S. --- BOTH FEDERAL AND STATE. FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION HAS BEEN BROUGHT INTO THESE DISCUSSIONS.

2. MEA UNAWARE OF THE LATEST NAFSA LETTER (REFTEL). SANU HAD LEFT WASHINGTON BEFORE LETTER WAS SENT AND IT APPEARS NIGERIAN EMBASSY HAS YET TO INFORM LAGOS OF ITS CONTENTS. WE DID NOT DISCUSS DETAILS OF LETTER WITH EDREMODA.

3. COMMENT: WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THIS SITUATION COULD BECOME A SERIOUS IRRITANT IN U.S.-NIGERIAN RELATIONS, JEOPARDIZING THE POSITIVE EVOLUTION OF THE PAST MONTHS AND STARTING OFF CARTER ADMINISTRATION DEALINGS WITH NIGERIA IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF COMPLAINTS
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AND RECRIMINATIONS. EDUCATION OF SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF NIGERIANS

IN THE U.S. IS A MATTER OF STRONG AND SENSITIVE CONCERN TO FMG;
WITHDRAWAL OF THIS PRIVILEGE WOULD PRODUCE IMMEDIATE AND SHARP
REACTION. WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT FOR DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSY TO
DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO MAKE CLEAR THE HISTORY AND SERIOUSNESS
OF THE PROBLEM TO FMG AUTHORITIES AND IMPRESS ON THEM VITAL NEED
OF EMERGENCY ACTION TO CLEAR PAYMENTS TO SCHOLARSHIP HOLDERS
IMMEDIATELY SO THEY CAN CONTINUE THEIR STUDIES IN THE U.S.
BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT THAT FACTS OF SITUATION BE SET FORTH CLEARLY,
ESTABLISHING THAT U.S. COLLEAGES HAVE LEANED OVER BACKWARD TO
ACCOMMODATE NIGERIAN STUDENTS, THAT THEY HAVE HELD OFF ACTION A
YEAR OR MORE AND THAT THE LIMIT HAS NOW BEEN REACHED -- COLLEGES
CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO CARRY SUCH STUDENTS AT COLLEGE EXPENSE.
WE MUST TAKE CONSCIOUS PRECAUTIONS AGAINST FMG GAINING IMPRESSION
OF ARBITRARY OR UNFEELING ACTION BY U.S. INSTITUTIONS. BELIEVE
THIS CALLS FOR ACTIVIST USG ROLE: BOTH IN DEPARTMENT AND BY
EMBASSY, BRINGING FMG TO FIND PROMPT SOLUTION. WITHOUT SUCH
ACTION ON OUR PART, CONTINUING DRIFT BY FMG MAY RESULT IN
SUDDEN UNWELCOME EXPLOSION.
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